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Two New Lamorinda Businesses are Keeping Things All in the Family

By Sophie Braccini



The Erez family in their new restaurant; from left, Roy, Karin, Mikki, Vivian, with younger son Michael in front. Photo Sophie Braccini

Shish Kabab Show

376 Park Street, Moraga (in the Rheem Center), 388-0351, www.letseat.at/ShishKababShow

Mikki and Vivian Erez moved to Moraga from Orinda a year ago. They have three children, one in elementary school, one in middle school, and one in high school. And they are all working in the new family restaurant, Shish Kabab Show. "This is a family affair," says Karin, the middle daughter, "I'm really looking forward to working here; this is a great environment to be all together."

The Erez's moved to this country from their native Israel 12 years ago, leaving behind a successful restaurant and a summer camp program. Now they are getting back to doing what they love to do together – creating a

restaurant, using family recipes and savoir-faire. "This is not only a restaurant, this is a place for people to come together," says Mikki Erez adding that they have kept their prices low to attract students as well.

On the day this reporter visited, the salads and vegetable dishes were being taste-tested. Tables were covered with a wide variety of dishes of all colors, aromas and textures. Everything was fresh, delicious and tasted homemade. The tahini was smooth and delicate, scooped with just baked pita bread; the hummus had more texture and was flavorful; the dolmas were mouthwatering; the falafels crunchy on the outside and tender inside; the salads were crisp, with herbs adding flavor. The meats – kababs and shawarmas – were not

served that day. But according to Vivian Erez, the meat dishes are the specialties that will set them apart because she gets her spices directly from Israel. "We are serving something unique here," she says, with the confidence of a professional cook. The meat dishes are served as entrees or sandwiches, and include chicken, lamb, mergez and seafood versions.

Open until midnight several nights a week and close to the New Rheem Theatre, Shish Kabab Show is poised to change the Rheem Center. At the back of the restaurant stands a lonely microphone on a small stage. Is that for the 'Show'? "We have a few surprises coming up!" replied Erez.

Zahra Boutique Salon

3578 Mt Diablo Blvd, Lafayette 284-3031, www.zahraboutiquesalon.com

When she was 21-years-old and mother of a three-year-old daughter named Shila, Zahra Pasti decided to flee the Iranian Islamic revolution and landed in Denmark. After 30 years of travel and hard work, Shila Dorrani-Unal and her mother Zahra just opened a new shop in Lafayette, Zahra Boutique Salon, across the street from Postino on Mount Diablo Boulevard. The concept is total beauty, from hair, to skin, to clothing; even some vintage objects for the home.

Zahra remained in Denmark for many years, where she enjoyed peace

after the turmoil she had witnessed. But one of her five sisters moved to the Bay Area and enticed Zahra to join her. "It was a real culture shock for me," remembers Shila, who was 13 at the time. "It was nice to be reunited with some of my family," adds Zahra, "we had been very close growing up. We were always doing each other's hair and make-up, so it was natural for me to move in that direction for my career." Zahra opened a beauty salon in El Sobrante that prospered for over 15 years.

In the meantime, Shila was growing up and spending all her spare time sketching and making dresses. After high school, she studied at the Fashion Institute (FDIM) in San Francisco and worked in pattern-making and sketching.

"We've learned a lot of things to-

gether," says Zahra, "We've had many struggles and adventures, and they've made us stronger." Now they are combining the mother's long time passion and practice of hair and skin care with her daughter's professional experience in the fashion world.

Zahra works her magic towards the rear of the shop with hair color, make-up, facials, and the ancient method of thread facial hair removal. Shila presides over the front area, where she offers 'shabby chic' clothing that she says brings out her European side. "When people come here it is to be beautified while staying comfortable," says Shila.

Lamorinda Weekly business articles are intended to inform the community about local business activities, not to endorse a particular company, product or service.



Zahra (front) with daughter Shila and younger daughter Sheva (standing) who sometimes helps in the store. Photo Sophie Braccini

business briefs

Garden Tour for Tech Trek Scholarship

John Montgomery Landscape Architects is sponsoring "Life in the Lafayette Garden" on Saturday, May 14. Proceeds from ticket sales will benefit the Tech Trek scholarship program sponsored by the Lamorinda branch of the American Association of University Women (AAUW-OML). Montgomery will be present to answer questions on the tour of five select Lafayette gardens. He believes "a landscape is much more than just shrubs, trees, and a patio. It has the power to rejuvenate, inspire, and relax." Presentations will include an outdoor cooking demonstration, urban farming demonstration, light refreshments, and live music. The tour will be held from 11:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m. Tech Trek is a week-long summer program for junior high school girls. The camp inspires young women to consider careers in science, technology, engineering, or math. The proceeds from this fundraiser will provide girls interested in math and science with scholarships to attend the Grace Hopper Tech Trek camp on the Stanford University campus. Tickets are \$25 each. For more information, call AAUW member Pat at (925) 376-5155 or visit www.aauwoml.org/TechTrek.html.

Tri-Chamber Meeting – Make Your Movie

Lafayette, Moraga, and Orinda will hold a Tri Chamber Mixer at The New Rheem Theatre, 350 Park Ave, Moraga, on Tuesday, April 26. Since the meeting will be in a movie theater, the Chambers are asking residents to shoot a video (three minutes or less in length) or create a PowerPoint presentation or slide show about how much they love their town/city. "I thought, we are in a theater and we are all proud of our city – and hey, let's have some fun," said Lafayette Chamber Executive Director Jay Lifson. Winners from each community will be shown on the big screen and win prizes. All submissions

must be on a DVD. Please contact the Lafayette Chamber of Commerce for submission instructions, 284-7404.

J. Rockcliff Realtors "Office of the Year"

89 Davis Road, Suite 100, Orinda; (925) 253-7000 3799 Mt. Diablo Boulevard, Suite 100, Lafayette; (925) 385-2330

J. Rockcliff Realtors announced on March 10 that its "Office of the Year" award will go to the company's Orinda and Lafayette branches which are viewed as, and function as, one united Lamorinda office. The annual award recognizes outstanding achievement in year-over-year growth in production, recruitment and overall performance. "Our Orinda/Lafayette office has positioned itself at the vanguard of industry expertise, leadership and community involvement," said Jeff Sposito, president of J. Rockcliff Realtors. "Between the two branch locations, there are not only some of the most respected and successful Realtors in the area, but in the nation. They are industry leaders. They are community leaders. They are compassionate, involved, engaged and focused and serve as excellent examples to their peers. It is an honor for me to congratulate them for being named our company's office of the year and I look forward to rewarding their sustained accomplishments in the future."

News from the three Chambers of Commerce Lafayette

- Entrepreneur's Club, March 17, 8:30-9:30am in the Lafayette Chamber Conference Room.
- Coffee with the Mayor, March 18, 8-9am in the Lafayette Chamber Conference Room.
- Green Committee Open Meeting, March 22, noon-1pm in the Lafayette Chamber Conference Room.
- Ribbon Cutting at Posh Boutique, March 24, 5-6pm. 3416 Mt. Diablo Blvd. (925) 962-9691.
- Business Issues/Government Affairs Committee Open Meeting, March 25, 8-9am in the Lafayette Chamber

Conference Room.

• 2011 Citizen of the Year Dinner Honoring Karen Mulvaney, Friday, March 25. Karen Mulvaney has been picked as the 2011 Citizen of the Year. Anyone who has worked on a school parcel tax, the library of the many projects Karen has worked on, knows that she gives it her "all." Karen will be honored on Friday, March 25th with a dinner at the Lafayette Park Hotel & Spa. Reservations are required, the form is available on the Chamber's web site, www.lafayettechamber.org.

Moraga

Chamber general meeting, Friday, March 25, 7:30-9am at the Hacienda, 2100 Donald Drive. Roos' muffins and coffee will be served. Mary Coe, Renee Zeimer and Rich Larsen, the Moraga Economic Development Team, will be the guest speakers. They plan a large outreach effort to the Moraga business community.

Orinda

First Annual State of the City Address and Special Recognition Awards Luncheon on Wednesday, April 20, starting at noon in the Orinda Community Center, 26 Orinda Way, Orinda. The event is hosted by Rotary Club of Orinda and Orinda Chamber of Commerce. It will recognize Julian Juricevic's Orinda Taxi as Best Small Business in Orinda. The State of the Town Address will be given by Mayor Victoria Smith. The Chamber will also give Special Recognition Awards to Sally Hogarty, Editor of the Orinda News and columnist Valerie Hotz. RSVP required by April 15. Tickets are \$20.00 per person - to purchase tickets go to the Chamber's web site at www.orindachamber.org/events.htm#AwardsDinner.

If you have a business brief to share, please contact Sophie Braccini at sophie@lamorindaweekly.com or call the office 925-377-0977

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